THE FRIENDLY VINDICATION OF Mr. DRYDEN From the CENSURE of the ROTA BY His CABAL of WITS.

Danda est helicbori nostro pars magna Poetæ,
Nescio an Anticyram ratio illi destinet omnem.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

The Friendly Vindication

OF

Mr. DRYDEN, &c.

THe excellent Mr. *Dryden* taking into ſerious conſideration the Affairs of *Wit*, and having made an Aſſignation to that purpoſe with ſome flouriſhing *Ingenuities*, no leſs conſcious than admirers of his Fame: One of the forwardeſt urged the immediate diſcuſſing the ſevere Cenſure of the *Rota of Oxford*; which, though ſeeming only to point at *Granada*, did collaterally reflect on all his *Plays* and *Poems* whatſoever. Mr. *Dryden*, not a little ſurprized to hear of *Critical Engines* levelled at his *Sieges*, *Conqueſts*, and the like, was meekly falling into a ſwound almoſt paſt recovery by tweaking of his Noſe; till one of his ingenious Friends putting him in mind how the King had made him his *Laureat*, and how his *Muſe* had accompliſhed him for her *Hero*, in both which reſpects it did not become him to diſcover that ſhe had placed her *Enſigns* of *Wit* in ſo unſteady and puſillanimous a *Brain* as his might appear to be, (did he not ſuddenly recollect his Spirit according to that Expreſſion in his *Maiden-Queen*, ſpoken by her Handmaid *Aſtrea*, Act. 1.)

You were gay humour'd, and you are
Now penſive * ——
Once calm and now unquiet ——

* *Melancholick* in the firſt Impreſſion.

Not to say that few Poets besides Mr. *Dryden*, ever treated a Queen with so light and homely an Entertainment of Words, as, *Gay-humour'd*, and the rest in these two ridiculous lines.

A *Knavish Wit* here, that had a good mind to have been nibling at the fore-going Expression, which signified no more in all those words, than to say that the Queen was at some one time in better humour than at another: yet as he was of Mr. *Drydens* Cabal, said, he should rather infuse into his soul (in this Conjuncture) some Doses of *Maximins* and *Almanzors* Heroical Bravery, and not give himself up to his Pursuers: like that *simile* of the Hare in *Annus Mirabilis*, of which two whole *Stanza's* are paraphrastically, and somewhat more compendiously rendred, thus,

Ev'n as the fearful Hare, when cours'd on Plain,
And longer can't her flight maintain,
By the fierce Dog, with fix turn'd up does lie,
Who though not kill'd, yet cannot flie.

The Reader may suppose that Mr. *Dryden* was in almost as cold a fit as the Hare he describes, wherefore not in a condition to be asked by what reason he calls fearful, so timorous a Creature as a Hare naturally is; since no man ever heard of a *valiant Hare*: or why he presumed to apply this mean *simile* to Prince *Ruperts* Ship and some others, when disabled in their fight with the *Dutch*; which if allowed, does rather imply that the Prince and the rest, had run away like the Hare at first, and would have done so afterwards, in imitation of a Hare, had it been in their power; and not have encountred the Enemy with that magnanimity that appeared

appeared throughout this action. But though this *simile* squar'd so ill with the gallantry of the Action, a fault not to be pardoned in Poetry, since its Illustrations and Metaphors should not only suit, but endeavour to exalt, (and not depress, as it is observable in Mr. *Dryden*) the greatness of the Subjects it treateth of; According to this of *Horace*,

Incœptis gravibus plerumque & magna professis,
Purpureus late qui splendeat, unus & alter,
Assuitur pannus. ——

Yet this Gentleman who spake last was so indulgent to Mr. *Drydens* Repute, that he advised him, rather than yeild to any thing that could be objected against his Poetry, to turn the line in his first Part of *Granada*, mentioned by the *Rota*,

This is my will, &c. into
This is my wit, and this my wit shall be.

Adding, that he conceived his Muse had not made a more useful conversion for him of any Verse of his. That he had proved they had kindness enough to justifie what he had, or could write, though they barked for his sake, at better Wit than any of his.

At which, some conflict passed betwixt the *Pale* and *Vermilion* of his Cheek, (a thing very incident to such Complexions, when made Creatures of Fame) as also some melancholy puffs and swellings against the *Rota*, as if he had been inclinable to break silence with this patherick and Courtly Expression delivered by his Maiden Queen ——

I must tell you, it is a sawcy *
Boldness thus to press on my Retirements.

* Some say his first Copy had *consuming* in stead of *sawcy*, not much a better Epithet join'd to Boldness.

Here one made a *Querie*, whether *Sawcie* was not a pretty *Sawce-box* word annexed to boldness. Another of his Comrades, who had Authority enough over his Person and Muse, to pass his Raillery, said, that his restauration of spirit in this Issue of his affairs, put him in mind of that Poetical Expression of his in *Maximin*, *Pag.*4.

Midst this was heard the shrill and tender crie
Of well-pleas'd Ghosts, which in the storm did flie,
Danc'd too and fro, and skim'd along the ground,
'Till to the Magick Circle they were bound.

Here one took notice how excellently Mr. *Dryden* had described the Voices, Musick, and Dancing of Ghosts; or if you please, an Antimask of Ghosts in the Air. But why shrill and tender should be the pleasing ornament of their Voices, since in it self no delightful way of speaking, or singing, was to be left to the discussion of Ghosts and Mr. *Dryden* alone: though they could not but condescend, that Mr. *Dryden* did deserve a tender Rebuke at least, for this harsh and gentle fiction, which his Pen had so musically bestowed on Ghosts. That it was true, that out of their respects to him, they had often endeavoured to blind the World from observing the incongruity of such Metaphors, (as sawcy boldness, shrill and tender, and the like,) not seldom used by him in this inconsistent manner of Expression, the better to wing his Muse to her height; or that she might flie in any storm, or

dance

dance to and fro, or skim along the ground, as he and she thought best: since he had merited that kindness from them, by his most ingenious converse and writing (besides some other more secret obligations) as also to cry up and preserve the honour of the Laurel conferred on him. Wherefore considering the Opposition which he and they have had, or may have; especially at this time, when his Muse is so perniciously attaqued by the *Rota*, and other malignant Criticks: they thought fit to desire him for the better strengthening of himself, to apply these Verses likewise of his *Maximin* to his present dangers,

* *They coursing it, as he were fenc'd within*
And saw this dreadful Scene of Fate begin.

* They Coursing it, that is to say, The *Rota* coursing his Muse.

which is his very conjuring expression, placing, *as he were*, in stead of, *while we were.*

Another said ingeniously enough, that the Censure of the *Rota*, or its Author, passed on his Poems and Plays, did very pertinently metaphor the volubility and rotation of Poetical fortune in neglect of his *Wit*; which it became him confidently to resent according to this in *Maximin*, where his Muse had often threatned bombast-vengeance on Gods and Men:

Provoke my rage no further, least I be
Reveng'd at once, upon the Gods and Thee.

At this some could not chuse but smile (though his Entire Admirers) to think what a supreme Divinity Mr. *Drydens* Muse was, that durst thus threaten all Powers, Divine and Human.

Mr. *Dryden* being pretty well refreshed by swallow-

ing these Cordials extracted from his Muses *Limbecks*, after he had cleared some drops of cold sweat from his forehead, and rubbed it to some Confidence, with due Obeysance made to these his Friends and Applauders, together with some pangs of thought, (not much unlike his Inspirations) Replied, That he must always acknowledge the support his *Wit* received from the Esteem and Vogue they allowed it; which though his Enemies called making his Party and Faction, it had been hitherto his good providence: nay added, That (among themselves) he had no reason to expect applause without it. That he still implored the same favourable Aspects from them, and that they would dare all Eyes which should observe or read his Writings with any reflections on their faults: though they may believe that it troubled not a little his Conscience, that notwithstanding their assignation of favour to his late New Play called *Love in a Nunnery*, the Town should conceive it Justice to condemn both his and their Endeavours. Upon which, he more instantly desired them for the future to *clap* and *bawl* more exceedingly for his sake, lest he sink by the Censure of the World, as well as the *Rota's*: that whatsoever was his, might be reverenced as a Play, and so voted, though without *Intrigue* or *Wit*. And since they had put him into a way to strengthen himself with his own Lines, he uttered these in *Maximin*, (a Play fruitful enough for such quotations) for their more kind memorial, using the word Plays, in stead of Wars,

We are not sure to morrow will be ours;
Plays, have like Love, their favourable hours;
Let us use all, for if we lose one day,
That white one in the Crowd may slip away.

He

He desired them to forgive the large extent of this Petition, though perhaps the *Rota* might conceive it *Non-sense* amongst the rest; it being not usual in the *English* Tongue, to call a fair, serene, or prosperous day, a white day: That he desired them to impute this Inspiration to a Dream he had of white Money, to be shared in the Play-house. Adding, that nothing less could square with his profit, than wholly appropriating the fame and perquisits of *Wit*, (at least of one Play-house) to himself: for which purpose, he could not but with all humility, implore their Embargo on all other Poets that might possibly impair his repute, and Trade of Writing, though their Consciences were so guilty as to believe his Plays the worst.

That the *Drama* did require too many drams of *Wit* (he hoped they would excuse his Clinch) to be compounded by his *Genius*; which in the beginning of his undertaking he sufficiently observed, as was evident to them and the World, in his Practises to gain Proselytes to his Muse. As also his humble and supplicant Addresses to *Men* and *Ladies of Honour*, to whom he presented the most of his Plays to be read, and so passing through their Families to comply their Censures before-hand: confessing ingeniously, that had he ventured his *Wit* on the *Tenter-hooks of Fortune* (like other Poets, who depended more on the merit of their Pens,) he had been more severely intangled in his own Lines long ago.

To this, one of his Associate *Wits* replied, That he thought it reasonable (were his profit not too deeply concerned) to perswade him to desist from Writing, as some Poets had discreetly and timely observed; like that of *Juvenal*,

Erange

Frange Miser Calamos——

since he was as egregious already as black and white could make him. But however, if he were taken for no good Comick-Poet, or Satyrist; he had found a way of much easier License, (though more remarkable in the sense of some) which was, not only to Libel mens persons, but to represent them on the Stage too: That to this purpose he made his observations of men, their words and actions, with so little disguise, that many beheld themselves acted for their Half Crown: yet after all, was unwilling to believe, that this was not both good Comedy, and no less good manners. Besides, that he had been so frankly obliging as (where he could not use a Character, or apprehended the License) to assign it to some other Poet of his Cabal, or exchange one Part for another, it may be *Club Wit* too, the better to set men forth: That this was a *Sir Positive Truth* Mr. *Dryden* had not fore-head enough to denie.

At which, there being observed a guilty variety in his Countenance—— A certain Gallant stept forth and said, that what was past, was past: besides, that Mr. *Dryden* had made his submissions and recantations most ingeniously both by word and writing: that he conceived a person of Honour, had a Letter dedicated to the Fire, even by the Hangmans hands, if the injur'd should think it necessary; therefore what was done was candid enough as to that particular. If Mr. *Dryden* courted more his security than honour, he was not to be blamed, if his temper found it convenient: Or it might be interpreted his Kindness, in not being willing to put so much *Wit* as his own to hazard, especially

cially since he proved it so dear to his Admirers. That it was enough to Cajole the fiercest Hector, imployed on any such account to him; as perhaps it succeeded with Sir *Fretchevil Hollis*, from this Verse in *Annus Mirabilis*,

Young Hollis, *on a Muse by Mars begot.*

No less than *Youth*, *wit*, and *Valour*, chained together in one line; besides such a way to beget a *Hero* as is not to be found in any Poet; except that of his *Almanzor*, as extraordinarily begot by Mr. *Dryden* on his Muse.

Here he extolled the *charming Wit* of Mr. *Dryden*, that could so prepossess the hearts of men.

In a word, where he had figured any on the *Scene*, or *Press*, he was no less plyant to take them off as dexterously again: That it was Mr. *Dryden*'s *Bizarre in Wit*, and Poets must be allowed so much variety, as sometimes to exceed the limits of Moderation and regular Characters.

Mr. *Dryden* was in some disorder here, as indeed the mention of Regular parts and Characters could not but concern all his Plays, and did most especially at this time put him in mind of his dear beloved *Almanzor*; in honour to whom, he had adorned the Frontispiece of *Granada* with,

—Major rerum mihi nascitur Ordo,
Majus opus moveo.

and was now no less inwardly lamented by him, as suffering by the *Academick Rota*, not only as an abominated *Hero*, but as one who with his unruly Lines had

broke most scornfully the Right Reverend *Priscians* head, with some other deformities—— he was going to add, *a gloomy smile arose*; but that it appeared by Mr. *Dryden*,

* Cited by the *Rota* out of the *Granada*.

——— * *That the more he heard,*
A more severe and sullen Joy appear'd.

Another was saying that Mr. *Dryden's Wit* could be both blunt and sharp; and that the edge of day might possibly have this operation on his Muse when she awak'd his Verse too early, or out of humour; wherefore he advised Mr. *Dryden* to trie what Effect the edge of Night would have on his Imagination; and perhaps the Metaphor might be better allowed *going to Bed*, or *Drunk*: desiring him to recollect what time of the natural Day it was, that he writ the Prologue before the *Maiden Queen*, beginning thus;

He that writ this, not without pain and thought,
From French *and* English *Theatres has brought*
The exactest Rules, by which a Play is wrought.

Whether Mr. *Dryden* was not confident enough, in putting such a *Panegyrick* of himself before a Play written with so feminine an *Intrigue* and *Genius*, as may be perceived by what hath been instanced already, in stead of troubling the Brain with further Remarques.

At which another replied briskly, that it was Mr. *Dryden's* Interest to be allowed to speak, write, censure of Men and Wit as he pleased; that he had done it hitherto fortunately enough, and that for his sake they must needs applaud him, which was well enough hinted before by himself.

That it must be granted on all sides that Mr. *Dryden* has *Wit*, or was to be thought *witty* ——

Here one of his *Comrade-wits* cried, *Hold*, That it was not good to proceed on that ground, because it was sallacious, and would be answered by many, in saying, That he never had that Judgment or Wit he pretended to, for a Reason mentioned by the *Rota*, and such a one as Mr. *Dryden* could not deny.

Wherefore the Logick of the Argument being in effect no more but this,

Either you have a Gig, or have lost a Gig,

Which may be answered by saying,

You never had a Gig.

But he forbore to apply it to Mr. *Dryden*. He proceeded to shew, That whatsoever was Mr. *Dryden*'s Wit, it was well enough proportioned to receive what praises they could bestow upon it; or what could be given by himself, to himself; To which purpose, his dealing with *Ben Johnson* (though dead, and of Immortal Fame with the judicious) was very observable, in that Mr. *Dryden*, who had at one time thought fit to call his Comedy, with the rest of his Time, mean, low, or as you have it in this hobling Verse of his mentioned by the *Rota*,

Then Comedy was faultless, but 'twas course,

(not to examine the consistency of *course* and *faultless*,) At another time had otherwise sung a Parallel of his Muses Fame with *Ben. Johnson*'s, as in his Prologue

to the *Maiden Queen*, where he vain-gloriously enough calls that Play

——— *a mingled Chime*
Of Johnsons *humour, and* Corneille's *Rhime.*

But how *Johnsons* humour, could make such Musick with *Corneille's* rhyme, is not to be understood otherwise, than as Mr. *Dryden* hath made his own Commendation and it chime together. Which may be called another *Bizarre* in Mr. *Dryden.*

As for his Comedy, it was objected by some, that it was as great an offence to good Morality, as his *Maximin* was to Christianity. That his *Marriage a la Mode*, and his *Love in a Nunnery*, were most excellent Collections of *Bawdery.* But the wonder was, how Mr. *Dryden* came to conceive his fulsome Conceits to be refin'd Wit; as he had suggested to his Friends, since *Bawdery* had never that repute, before Mr. *Dryden* writ it. That in good Comedy, there were innumerable Excellencies relating to *Wit* and *Manners*, to which there was some fear that his *Genius* would never arrive: which shews, that if his Invention be not free and airy enough for that purpose, his Imagination (whatsoever his person is) was sufficiently lascivious. But perhaps Mr. *Dryden* conceives of the success of Plays, as *Martial* did of some licentious Writings of his:

Non possunt sine mentula placere.

or which is all one, the *Dildo* of Mr. *Drydens* Muse, so neatly applied to the females of the Town.

He that said this, though a great favourer of Mr. *Dryden*,

den, could not but grant that there were a great many Contradictions and Miſtakes in the management of his *Muſe*.

Here another took up the Diſcourſe, ſaying, That ſince they were now met thus, it was not unfriendly to proceed to ſome Reformation of Mr. *Drydens Wit* and *Manners* together; as well as they had hitherto in a headlong manner vindicated him to the World. In order to which, it was to be told Mr. *Dryden* that he in the ſenſe of ſome, with no leſs Arrogance and Ignorance, taxed *Virgil* the Prince of *Latine* Poets, then he had injured *Ben Johnſon* the beſt of *Engliſh*; that in his Preface to his *Annus. Mirabilis*, notwithſtanding to adorn that miraculous Poem he had tranſverſed many things of the incomparable *Virgils*, (as may be ſeen by his acknowledgment, and Marginal Notes to that purpoſe,) yet he there ſays thus of him:

Though he deſcribes his Dido *well and naturally, in the violence of her paſſions, yet he muſt yield to* Ovid *in that of* Myrrha, *the* Biblis, *the* Althea *of Ovid*..

And a litte after,

That if I ſee not more of their ſouls, then I ſee of Dido's, *at leaſt I have a greater concernment for them.*

He added, That he could not chuſe but reprehend this ſolœciſm of commendation in Mr. *Dryden*: wondring with what Brow he could ſay, that if he ſaw not more of their ſouls then he ſaw of *Dido's*, yet he had a greater concernment for them. How this would paſs, or could quadrate with any favourable allowance of ſenſe, he could not imagine. For to ſay that *Dido's* was the more large, the more heroick, the more paſſionate Soul, yet muſt not concern Mr. *Dryden's* Ingenuity ſo far as the others, he thought fit to under-

ſtand it amongſt the reſt of Mr. *Dryden*'s *Bizarrs* in Wit and Judgment. And that he would not chuſe his Panegyricks of moſt Poets, ſince they were either Impertinent, or Contradictory to what he could wiſh in him. Wherefore he would mind him of what ſome Criticks may retort upon him, (who though they take it not well, yet do not judge it worth their labour to vindicate the matchleſs Wit of *Virgil*) that if they ſee not more of his Love, than was to be ſeen in his *Eliza* the *Maiden Queen*, or what they ſaw in his St. *Catherine*, or his *Light buskin'd Queen Almahide*; (that made *Boabdalin* her Cully, though her King and Husband, in order to the Embrace of her more ſtrenuous *Almanzor*,) or if they perceived the ſame effects of his Muſe in *Maximin* and *Almanzor*, as alſo throughout thoſe Plays convertibly varied, he was not to believe they could be much concerned with his Characters; or that moſt of his Friends would not wiſh that Mr. *Dryden* would either improve his Muſe, or give over writing.

At this Mr. *Dryden* began to be in a cold Sweat again; till promiſed that the diſcuſſion of *Maximin* and *Granada* ſhould be deferred to a farther debate, if his concern required it.

Which a forward Wit of his Party perceiving, ſaid, That the Gentleman that ſpoke laſt (though he could not contradict his Judgment) had miſtaken the *Intrigue* that Mr. *Dryden* endeavours to hold with the World: that Mr. *Dryden* writ as well as any man that could write no better; and was no leſs himſelf in his laſt Play, called *Love in a Nunnery*; the ſucceſs whereof had occaſioned him to confeſs, that he ſometimes by their help had ſtarved a Play on the Audience, and that it was his utmoſt expectation and deſire,

fire, that they would continue ſtill ſo kind as to queſtion nothing of his; that it had been likewiſe acknowledged by him, that he intended the ſame, for this laſt Catholick *Intrigue* of his, which he called *pawning of a Play on the Town.*

The Expreſſion was ſomething odd, it was yielded, and repreſented his hearers no leſs than *Sots* and *Gulls*, to be bubbled thus of their Underſtandings by him. That Mr. *Dryden*'s Education was not ſo exact, as that no mixture was to be found in his *Manners* as well as *Wit*: that he was a Poet in *Olivers* time, and ſomething more ſubſervient to his Principality; but theſe were things to be handled at another meeting, if Mr. *Dryden* thought fit: adding that he did write more for Profit than Reputation, or collaterally for both. The firſt of which, he allowed to be the more abſolute Miſtreſs of his Muſe, as was hinted by himſelf before: though it is true that as an Ambidexter in Wit, he intended to engroſs both ſolely to himſelf. But he was to know that Mr. *Dryden*'s words did not always declare his meaning, and were varied as beſt ſerved his turn; ſometimes for money, ſometimes for both money and fame; another time for fame * above all things, who by no means muſt be allowed other than the beſt Poet in *England*, and had ſo cauſed himſelf to be given out by his Friends; which cannot but be acknowledged another *quaint* variety in Mr. *Dryden.*

* See th: concluſion of his Letter to Sir *R. H.* before his *Anu. Mirab.*

One asked whether upon the before-mentioned diverſities obſerved in Mr. *Dryden*, he might not heroickly deſcribe himſelf by ſaying this Verſe in *Maximin*,

I reel and ſtagger, and am drunk with light.

That

That it must be acknowledged, that Mr. *Dryden* could not deserve less than to be soberly blamed; and so they had done and should do farther, as occasion offered. He said, that it had been granted already that Mr. *Dryden* had been held an odd man enough always, by some who had proved him. Notwithstanding, if his merit was small, they were sorry he had taken so much pains to divulge it; which they did unwillingly instance to him at this time, considering he was something pensive and indisposed, as being under a *gloomy sullen* Censure of the *Rota's*; and his Muse to undergo a severe penance for his assignations of *Love in a Nunnery*; all which it was hoped he would suffer with a *shrill tender* easiness of mind, if she could not inspire him with a more proper and secure remedy. As likewise, not to be enraged from these gentle stroakings of his Friends, or hope from thence more safely to kick at their Counsels, like this of *Horace*,

Hunc male si palpere, recalcitrat, undique tutus.

When on the other side, it is but taking advice from his own Verse, and receive this noise and hubbub about his Wit, no more disturbed then if

A horrid stillness did invade his Ear.

For his Plays, it was unanimously accorded, that though they wished them well, they resolved henceforth to be more just to his failings than they had hitherto appeared, and not endeavour the pawming of them on the Town, if his Wit had no better a trick to thrive by.

Ask-

Asking ſome pardon of the World for ſo long concealing his defects, or miſtaking his Wit, to the neglect of better: That if he did imploy ſome vacant hours of his Muſe for his vindication againſt the *Rota*, they thought it not amiſs (at leaſt before he writ any more Plays) ſince his Audience was reſolved to conſtrue his ſenſe a little better than yet they had done.

And ſince Mr. *Dryden* and his Muſe, are beſt extolled by his own Pen, it was thought fit to annex this honourable and pacifick Wiſh to his future Productions of Wit; (taken out of his *Maximin*) uſing only the word *Writing* in ſtead of *Thouſand*,

Thus,

So may'ſt thou live thy Writing *Years in Peace,*
And ſee thy Airy Progeny increaſe.

FINIS or not FINIS

As Mr. *Dryden* pleaſeth.